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FILM STUDY EXTRACT

SPELLBOUND

THE RAZOR SEQUENCE

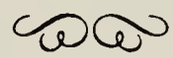
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NOTES AND ANALYSIS

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Macmillan Films Inc.

FILM STUDY EXTRACT



SPELLBOUND

(United States, 1945)

THE RAZOR SEQUENCE

10 min.

NOTES AND ANALYSIS

by John Hess

CREDITS

Director ..... Alfred Hitchcock
Screenplay ..... Ben Hecht
Photography ..... George Barnes
Music ..... Miklos Rozsa
Editing ..... Hal C. Stern

CAST

John Ballantine ..... Gregory Peck
Constance Petersen ..... Ingrid Bergman
Doctor Brulov ..... Michael Chekhov

Project Director: Willard W. Morrison
Editorial Consultant: Marilyn Fabe

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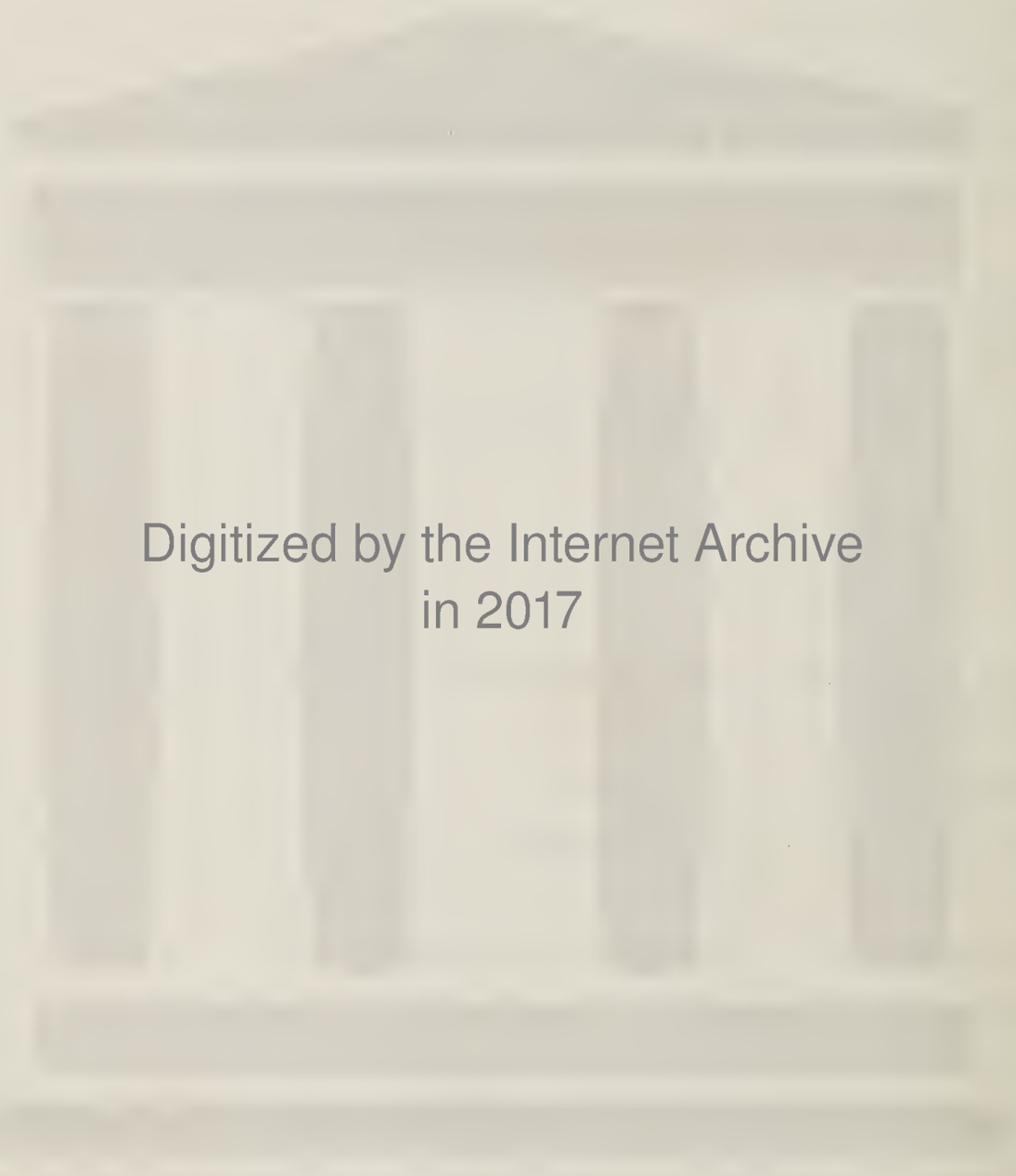
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SPELLBOUND

Plot Synopsis

John Ballantine (Gregory Peck), impersonating the famous psychiatrist Anthony Edwardes, arrives at Green Manors to relieve the long-time director, Dr. Murchison (Leo G. Carroll). On the very first day, Ballantine/Edwardes and Constance Petersen (Ingrid Bergman), the insane asylum's only female doctor, fall in love. Through a series of strange incidents Constance learns that Ballantine is not Edwardes but an amnesiac who thinks he has probably killed the real Dr. Edwardes and taken his identity. But in true Hitchcock fashion, Constance does not turn Ballantine in. That night, just before the police arrive in search of Dr. Edwardes' impersonator, Ballantine departs for New York, leaving Constance a note. Confronted by the police, Constance once more refuses to give Ballantine away. Soon thereafter she goes to New York to find the man she has fallen in love with and wants to cure.

Thus begins the typical Hitchcock flight-from-the-law/quest-for-the-truth. Constance takes Ballantine to the home of her former teacher, Dr. Alex Brulov (Michael Chekhov), in Rochester. Although the professor realizes that Ballantine is very likely a dangerous patient, he agrees to allow them to stay for a few days while he and Constance try to cure Ballantine's amnesia. The next morning Ballantine tells the two psychoanalysts his very complicated dream (created visually by Salvador Dali) and they partially interpret it. Constance and Ballantine go off to Gabrial Valley, a ski resort where they all believe Ballantine and Dr. Edwardes had gone skiing together.

Skiing down a slope toward a cliff, Ballantine relives a childhood traumatic experience in which he caused the accidental death of his brother. Ever since that time he has suffered from a guilt complex. This memory lifts the amnesia and he remembers that he and Edwardes were in fact skiing on this slope and that Edwardes went over the cliff (this experience, painfully reminiscent of his own brother's death, caused Ballan-

tine's amnesia). The police are notified and do indeed find the body just where Ballantine tells them they will find it.

But there is a last wrinkle: the body has a bullet in its back and Ballantine is arrested, tried and convicted for Edwardes' murder. After Ballantine goes to jail, Constance, who is convinced that the man she loves could not kill anyone, reexamines the dream and sees that Dr. Murchison must have killed Edwardes in order to prevent Edwardes from taking his job. When she confronts Murchison with this information, he kills himself. The happy couple go off together at the end, not into the sunset, but through the wrought iron gates down to the train platform.

Themes and Interpretation

Although SPELLBOUND was very popular when it appeared in the Fall of 1945, the critics have never taken to it nor given it the attention they have given many other Hitchcock films. In his long discussions with Hitchcock, Truffaut rushes over SPELLBOUND to get to NOTORIOUS. "I hope you won't be offended, but I must say I found the picture something of a disappointment." Hitchcock himself admits he found the film "too complicated, and the explanations toward the end very confusing."[1] On the surface it might seem strange that Hitchcock would find "confusing" a film that deals with the logical and rational process of psychoanalysis. Truffaut and Hitchcock both reject the very specificity in the film of a number of typical Hitchcockian themes and concerns which, in his other films, are dealt with in a much more ambiguous and purely visual manner. Hitchcock excels in the visual presentation of psychological and metaphysical states. In SPELLBOUND, however, these states, rather than implied, are made the very subject of the film. Thus the patient, John Ballantine, must talk about his psychological state which Hitchcock is at the same time presenting visually. A kind of overcrowding of the channels of communication results from this double presentation—and also a kind of confusion, since the two presentations are not always the same. This over-explicitness about what is suggestive and

ambiguous in his other films, makes SPELLBOUND seem less interesting than films such as STRANGERS ON A TRAIN, NORTH BY NORTHWEST, and THE WRONG MAN.

SPELLBOUND deals with a number of by now well known Hitchcockian themes: guilt and innocence, love versus duty, confession, the unreliability of appearances, the relationship between men and women, and the strong need Hitchcock feels to maintain the status quo regardless of how painful that is in modern society. When Constance goes to get a book from the asylum library, we see a close-up of her hand and three distinct titles: *Amnesia, Recent Advances in War Psychosis,* and Dr. Edwardes' "famous" *The Labyrinth of the Guilt Complex.* Amnesia is Ballantine's apparent problem. War psychosis is not just a topical subject for a film made in 1945, but also the problem for which Dr. Edwardes was treating Ballantine. But all this and much more comprise Hitchcock's labyrinth of the guilt complex, a phrase that could stand suitably as a title of all his films. For guilt—religious, moral, psychological, sexual, and metaphysical—stands at the very core of Hitchcock's work. Many of his films develop along the following lines: "they" accuse a certain man of a crime he didn't commit; rather than confront his accusers the man sets out in search of his innocence; he finds instead some sort of guilt; with the help of a woman's love and faith, he confesses his deeper guilt and is made whole again.[2]

Very often the accused man appears guilty of a crime actually perpetrated by another (THE WRONG MAN, NORTH BY NORTHWEST, STRANGERS ON A TRAIN, I CONFESS). The actual guilty man seems perfectly innocent (Murchison here) or doesn't appear until the very end (THE WRONG MAN). It would seem that Hitchcock is saying that actual guilt or innocence in the real world is irrelevant—the labyrinth of the guilt complex, the undifferentiated guilt we all bear and suffer from, "original sin" in religious parlance, is far more important because it is not based on anything so material as an actual crime. Nonetheless, in SPELLBOUND, because psychoanalysis is the framework upon which Hitchcock builds his story, a real traumatic experience must be discovered and relived before the

patient can free himself of his guilt. But Hitchcock's dissatisfaction with this clinical solution to the mystery in the film explains why there is a double ending. All seems clear until the police—always the vehicle of undifferentiated guilt in Hitchcock's films—enter to say that a bullet was found in Dr. Edwardes' back and that Ballantine is once more suspected of his murder (although clearly there would not be enough evidence to convict the man in this case). It is only when Constance goes back to Ballantine's oneiric confession that the real guilty party can be ascertained. By contriving the plot this way Hitchcock manages to prove his point: guilt and innocence lie not in the rules of evidence but in the unconscious, in our inner life.

Finally, SPELLBOUND has a social dimension that must not be ignored. The film belongs to a group of mid and late forties films which argue for the return of the women, who during the war took on "men's" jobs, to their pre-war "feminine" roles in the home (since this pacification program was being forced on them anyway). At the beginning of the film Ingrid Bergman with simple hair-do and glasses is a cool, competent, professional psychoanalyst who rejects the silly sexual advances of Dr. Fleurot (John Emery). But then she falls in love, in two seconds, with a returned Air Force man and begins to develop her "feminine" side, as Dr. Fleurot would call it. In fact the whole first portion of the film is about Constance's lack of femininity and emotionality and the awakening of these qualities after the arrival of Ballantine. Ballantine furthers this development in the traditional male manner: he always rejects her rational, professional side ("If there's anything I hate, it's a smug woman.") and accepts and encourages her mothering, nurturing side. This "training" of a woman is clear in the first part of the extract.

Love at first sight causes Constance to risk not only her career but also her life; as Dr. Brulov says, "a woman in love is operating at the lowest intellectual level." One might argue that it is Constance's rationality, driven by her love, that saves both of them and makes them whole again. But visually á different story is communicated. When she and Ballantine are fleeing the law, she helps him through the gateway to the train platform.

At the end of the film, he leads her through the same gateway. Then, she was in charge; now, he is. No middle ground exists; after the war there could be no sharing. Women to be "women" had to return to their pre-war subservience and devote themselves to the care and nurturing of the men who returned from the war.

THE EXTRACT

Plot Synopsis of the Extract

The extract from SPELLBOUND contains two distinct sequences which I will discuss separately, and a few shots at the end to relieve the tension created by the second sequence. The scene of both sequences is the home in Rochester, New York, of Constance's former professor. As the extract begins, Constance and John Ballantine bid good evening to Professor Brulov and ascend the stairs to the bedroom. Constance has told the professor that Ballantine is her husband, John Brown. After some conversation and a declaration of love, Ballantine becomes transfixed by the dark lines on the bedspread. Constance notices this, remembers that other dark lines have also disturbed him, and tries to get him to remember what these lines mean to him. He resists her prodding and finally collapses. A dissolve connects this early evening sequence to an early morning one.

In the second sequence, Ballantine wakes up, goes into the bathroom, and begins to shave. But the dark bristles of the shaving brush against the whiteness of the shaving cream and then other objects in the brightly lit bathroom so affect him that, razor in hand, he rushes out of the bathroom. He slowly and menacingly walks around Constance's sleeping form and goes downstairs. There he finds the professor who is sitting at his desk. The professor gives Ballantine a glass of milk and the last thing we see is Ballantine drinking the milk.

In the final bit at the end of the extract, we see Constance dressing and going down the stairs. She sees the professor slumped in a chair. She rushes to him, fearing that Ballantine has done

him some harm, but discovers that he is only asleep. Expecting trouble from a man he clearly saw was a mental patient, the professor had remained awake. The glass of milk contained bromides which put Ballantine to sleep.

Plot Construction of the Extract: Sequence I

Although the sequences in this extract are very different in tone, style, and *mise en scène,* they are very closely linked. Sequence I prepares the ground for Sequence II; the accumulated pressure of the flight, Constance's continual inquiry, and the dark lines on the bedspread have pushed Ballantine deep into his subconscious and produce both the dream that he has in the night (we don't learn about it until the sequence after the extract) and the actions in the second sequence. The first sequence begins with harmless banter, but the dialogue becomes more and more serious as the sequence proceeds. In fact, in all ways the sequence becomes increasingly serious and even ominous until Ballantine collapses to end it. The increasing suspense of this sequence prepares the audience for the razor sequence that follows; the audience is prepared to expect anything from Ballantine.

Plot Construction of the Extract: Sequence II

Tension was momentarily relieved at the end of the first sequence; now it builds again but at a higher level of intensity. In contemporary parlance, Ballantine "freaks out" and wanders around the house with an open straight razor in his hand. In this sequence, tension builds quickly and then is sustained by the very real menace involved and the possibilities for danger which are presented. First there is the possibility of a suicide in the bathroom, then the implication that Ballantine might try to kill Constance, and finally the danger to the professor. Each crisis leads to another, more serious than the last, until the sequence ends so ambiguously as to extend the tension into the next sequence, the beginning of which we have in the extract.

ANALYSIS OF FILM ELEMENTS IN SEQUENCE I OF THE EXTRACT

When Constance and Ballantine enter the bedroom, they are confronted with two problems simultaneously. First, and most obvious, is the sexual problem. They love each other and are pretending to be married. Also they are alone and comparatively safe for the first time since their flight from the law began. But in a 1945 movie they cannot sleep together. Second, Constance wants to penetrate Ballantine's unconscious as quickly as possible in order to cure him and thus prove his innocence before the law finally catches them. Thus her duty to him as his doctor takes precedence over her response to him as a woman. In addition, the tension between the couple prepares the audience for the razor sequence which follows. Although there is a good bit of dialogue in this sequence, too much in fact, the conflicts are shown and developed visually through choreography (movement of the characters in the frame), camera placement, lighting, and editing.

Choreography and Camera Placement

All the movement in the sequence is either across the line of sight of the camera or toward or away from it. This awkward, agitated movement creates a sense of the cross purposes and conflict at work in the sequence. Several times one of the characters walks so close to the camera that our vision is blocked entirely, increasing the sense of unbalance and agitation. Accompanying this motion is an attraction/withdrawal action between the two characters.

When they enter the room, Constance, who has taken the lead all along, walks deep into the room, but then retreats to the wall and sits down with her back to it. Ballantine hardly enters the room at all; he remains pressed against the wall during the initial banter. Then Constance walks directly toward the camera to the dresser and mirror. The second shot shows her reflection in the mirror. Ballantine enters the frame from the right and

stands behind her. Then she leaves the frame and he follows her again. Finally, in the third shot, they come together right in front of the camera, declare their love, and kiss.

Choreography is movement within the frame, but the frame is determined by camera placement. In these early shots the camera moves only slightly—no more than small adjustments to center the image—and sits trapped in a corner, seeing only a very restricted area along the wall in which the door is placed. At the bottom left we see part of the well-lit bed. On the top left side of the frame is a bulbous lamp which restricts our view of anything in the room and literally traps the camera in this position. If the camera panned to the left, it would only see more of the lamp. If it panned to the right, it would only see more of the wall.

Thus the rest of the room becomes that mysterious "off-screen," the darkness beyond the light. Hitchcock is famous for what he doesn't show us and for creating the sense that what we don't see is dangerous. Here the off-screen has a psychological dimension: it represents Ballantine's amnesia, his unconscious. Constance, as psychoanalyst, must lead him into this area. Thus, when Ballantine tries to pursue the love-making, Constance, remembering her role and duty as psychoanalyst, retreats into the room. An inserted close-up of Ballantine looking after her allows Hitchcock to get the camera out of its trap behind the lamp and then return to a shot of Constance standing in the center of the room. Ballantine follows her, she retreats again, this time around the bed to the corner where she turns on a table lamp. Through a series of short jerky motions, Ballantine has followed her into the off-screen, into the center of the room to the foot of the bed. Now he sees the dark lines on the bedspread and has a seizure.

This external choreography corresponds to the psychological choreography: the psychoanalyst has drawn her patient into his unconscious, has helped him penetrate that area of his psyche he has until now refused to enter. Once this happens, Constance comes to his aid. Finally he collapses, ending the sequence.

Lighting

The lighting in the early shots of the sequence plays no special role; there are no shadows or highlighting of characters. But at the left edge of the frame are two bright lights; the lamp at the top of the image and the over-lit lamp lower down. These bright spots in the image attract our attention away from the neutrally lit characters and thus create in us the same duality and tension which exist in the characters.

As the characters move into the central portions of the room, the lighting becomes more important, more expressive, and more ominous. As Constance walks around the bed a huge shadow of her appears on the wall behind her. From then on the whole set becomes shadowy and sinister. When Constance turns on the table lamp in the corner, it throws light up into her face, distorting her features. As Ballantine stares in anguish at the bedspread, his face is also distorted by low angle lighting. In fact, throughout the film — until the final scene — Ballantine's face is in the shadows.

Editing

As this sequence develops, the editing changes in order to increase the tension. At first the editing is very smooth, i.e. almost invisible. But to mark the transition between the cat and mouse game Constance and Ballantine play and his seizure, Hitchcock uses a jump cut from a medium long shot of Constance in the corner by the table lamp to a medium close-up of her in the same position. A series of quick cuts follow this startling jump cut: a medium close-up of Ballantine's face as he stares at the bedspread, a shot of the bedspread itself, the medium close-up of Constance as she tries to figure out what is going on with him, a low angle medium close-up of his face, eyes averted, and finally the medium close-up of Constance again. She walks around the bed to join him at its foot and a heated argument ensues; she tries to get him to look at the spread and figure out what bothers him about it. As he collapses the camera tilts down to follow the action and the sequence ends.

Music and Dialogue

Both of these elements weaken SPELLBOUND. The overly melodramatic music intrudes on many scenes which would be much better without it. In his interview with Hitchcock, Truffaut remarked that he liked "the first meeting between Gregory Peck and Ingrid Bergman; that was so clearly love at first sight." Hitchcock reveals his opinion of the sound track: "Unfortunately, the violins begin to play just then. That was terrible."[3] And the dialogue is often banal, if not just plain stupid. The dialogue problem probably has many explanations, but perhaps the fact that the film deals with a subject—guilt—in a much more direct way than Hitchcock usually deals with it causes the problem. Psychoanalysis is a very verbal undertaking and the film abounds in verbal explanations of things that in other Hitchcock films would be explained visually. The razor sequence is much better Hitchcock and much better cinema because there is no important dialogue and the melodramatic music fits the actions of the characters.

ANALYSIS OF FILM ELEMENTS IN SEQUENCE II OF THE EXTRACT

Editing Techniques for Continuity

After Ballantine wakes up and looks around the room, he gets up and walks to the bathroom door and leans on the door jamb. Finally, he reaches up with his left hand and turns on the light. Then there is a cut to him in the same position, but seen from inside the bathroom; Ballantine still has his hand on the light switch. This cut is a typical match cut whereby the illusion of a continual flow of action is maintained by matching the object, shape, position, movement, etc. of two consecutive shots. But match cuts are not as simple as this example would make it seem, especially since the two shots involved might be taken hours or even weeks apart and in different locations. The

perfect example of this case is when a cowboy walks out the door of a saloon, which is a set in a Hollywood studio, into the dusty street of a town on location somewhere in Arizona. The cut, or better, the transition, from the inside shot of the cowboy approaching the door has to perfectly match the shot from the outside showing the cowboy emerge from the doorway. An imperfect match will cause the audience to become aware of the mechanism of filmmaking—an awareness Hollywood tries mightily to suppress in its product. They go to great lengths to maintain this appearance of reality in a film by avoiding awkward transitions which would give away the industry behind the celluloid illusions.

Editing Techniques for Suspense

Hitchcock's films are a compendium of the uses of editing to create suspense. During the scene in the bathroom he presents a classic example of accelerated editing. The editing alternates between shots of various white objects in the bathroom—shaving cream and brush, sink, chair and table, another table, and the tub (Figs. 1-5)—and shots showing Ballantine's horrified reaction of panic on confronting these objects. The five shots of the



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

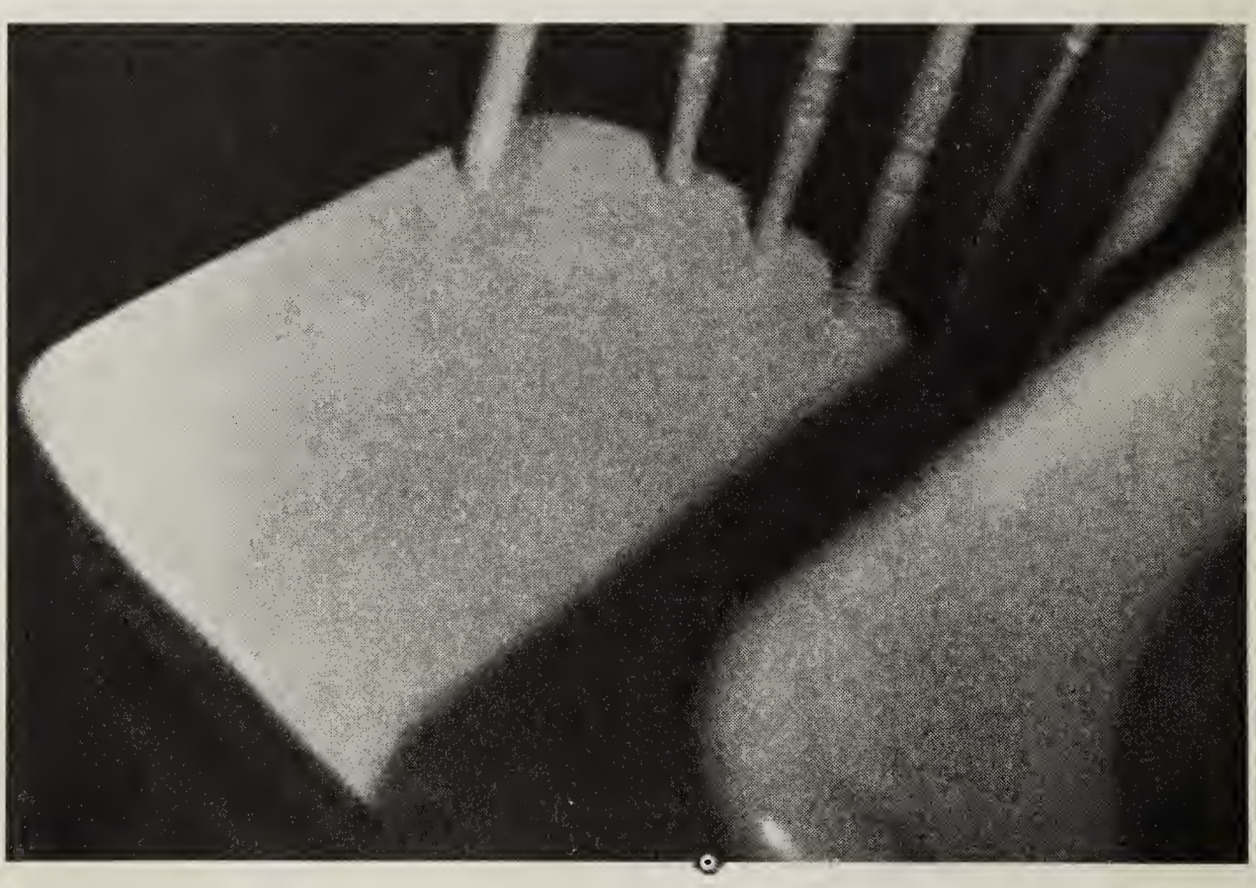


Fig. 3

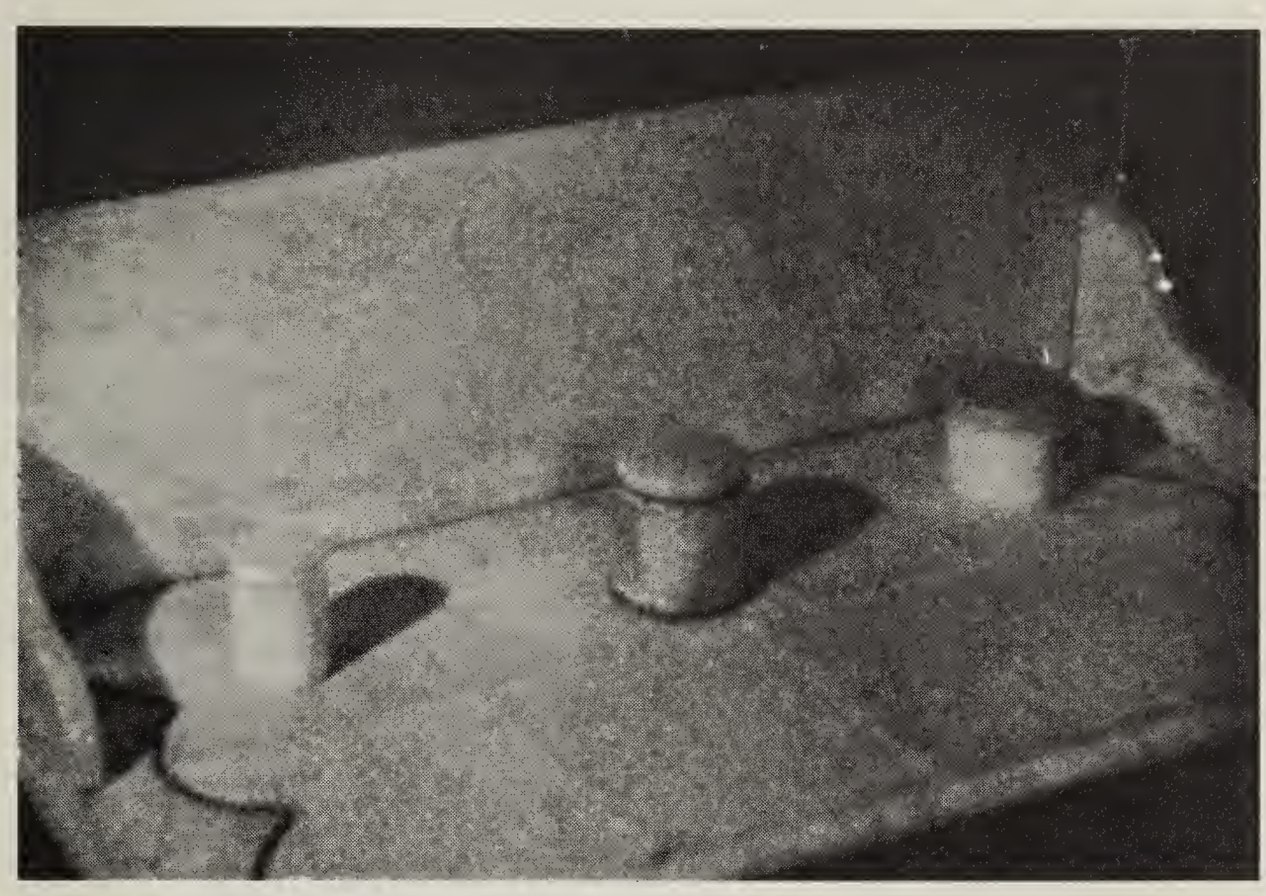


Fig. 4

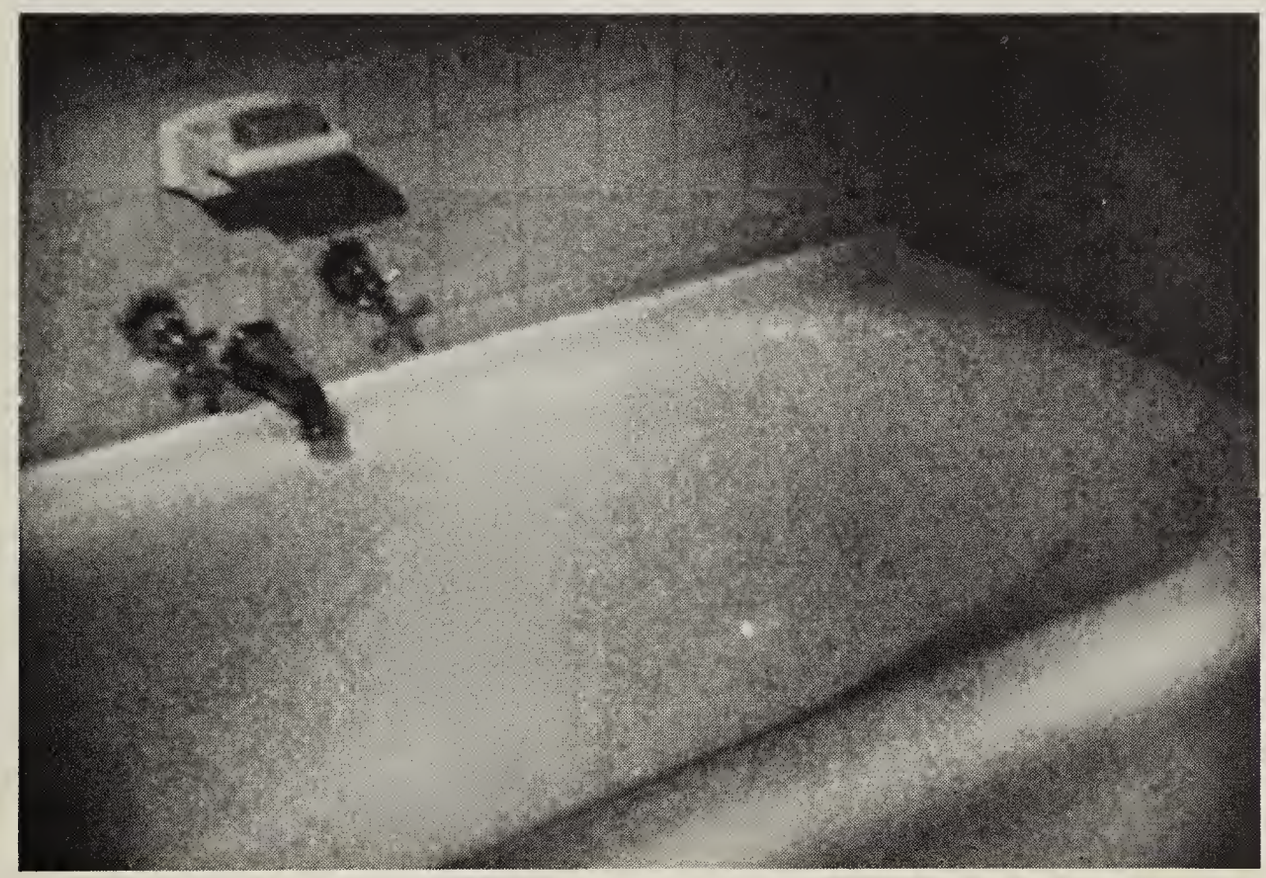


Fig. 5

objects are 87, 46, 28, 22, and 16 frames long respectively while the inserted close-ups of Ballantine's face are 55, 43, 31, and 28 frames long. Thus, the cuts become progressively quicker and with the help of melodramatic music create a great sense of tension which is momentarily relieved when Ballantine rushes to the door of the bathroom and leans on the door jamb looking into the merciful darkness of the bedroom.

But the "Master of Suspense" has us on the edge of our seats and is not about to let us go. A second series of less intensely accelerated cuts follows this short respite. Just as we get our breath, Hitchcock cuts to an extreme close-up of the bedspread which so offended and disoriented Ballantine in the previous sequence that he collapsed. We know the effect this bedspread has on him and we see that he still carries a straight razor. Playing on what we already know, Hitchcock slowly pans up the bedspread to a medium close-up of Constance's face—asleep, innocent, vulnerable, angelic, and very well lit (considering the darkness in the rest of the room). Then there is a cut to Ballantine, straight razor in hand, as he slowly approaches the bed and the camera, which tilts up to frame his face in close-up as he looks down on her. His face is expressionless; no intention or recognition registers; he stares blankly. Then there is a cut back to the close-up of Constance's face. This shot keeps the tension alive because we want to see what Ballantine is doing and now we can't. We only see the possible victim of an attack.

Hitchcock follows this close-up with a shock cut to a medium long shot of the whole scene—Ballantine standing in the middle of the darkened room with a straight razor in his hand as Constance sleeps in the bed. The cut from light to dark, from close-up to medium long shots jolts us. Also this would be the perfect angle and distance from which to watch a murder attack. But again the tension at its height is relieved as Ballantine walks by the bed and out of the room.

Film Techniques Used to Reveal Inner States

In SPELLBOUND only dark lines and the color white link Ballantine to the past he has forgotten. This association becomes, as the film progresses, a representation of Ballantine's guilt. In keeping with Hitchcock's puritanism, the dark lines on a white background become a visual representation of the destruction of innocence. As Constance, the name signifying faith and resoluteness, forces Ballantine back toward the experience which caused his guilt, he becomes more and more sensitive to the dark lines on the white background.

Thus in the bathroom scene Hitchcock attempts to reveal Ballantine's inner state of agitation, instability, and vulnerability by having him confronted with a series of white objects. To initially draw the audience into this inner state so that we can also experience it, Hitchcock uses an old trick of the cinema. As soon as Ballantine begins to mix the shaving cream that will set him off this time, the camera dollies slowly into a close-up of his face. Here is how Louis Giannetti describes this use of the dolly shot:

> One of the most common uses of dolly shots is to emphasize psychological rather than literal revelations. By slowly tracking in on a character, the director is getting close to something crucial. The movement itself acts as a signal to the audience, suggesting, in effect, that we are about to witness something important. A cut to a close-up would tend to emphasize the rapidity of the discovery, but a slow dolly shot suggests a more gradual and elusive revelation.[4]

Just as the camera comes to rest on Ballantine's face, he notices thin black lines in the white cream and begins to react. And we have been slowly brought into the center of the action and are ready to participate.

The objects to which Ballantine reacts literally surround him in the small bathroom; as he avoids looking at one object, he is confronted at once with another. This avoidance/confrontation action which has been going on all through the film, seems

to physically spin him around the small room and disorient him. By showing each object from Ballantine's perspective—a subjective shot—Hitchcock further involves us in Ballantine's disorientation.

To further the disorientation each of the subjective shots of the objects has no real point of reference or orientation; they are skewed images filled with diagonal and barely identified lines. Diagonal lines dominating an image create a sense of unrest in a viewer (see THE CABINET OF DOCTOR CALIGARI). When Ballantine finally rushes to the door of the room, we are filled with a sensation of a person fighting off the demons of the past.

Composition and Framing for Suspense

Hitchcock's theory of suspense is that the *more* facts we know the more intense the suspense will be because we will be more keenly aware of the potential dangers involved in the situation. Thus Hitchcock often focuses on the danger and allows the rest of the world to move around it rather than having the danger approach the victim. The several shots which follow Ballantine's exit from the bedroom are a good example of this kind of suspense. By composing his image in such a way to foreground the danger—the straight razor—Hitchcock very economically keeps the audience in a high state of tension. The camera is placed at the bottom of the stairway, just off to one side. From that vantage point we see Ballantine emerge from the shadows at the top of the stairway and slowly descend toward us. When he turns to his left to descend the last part of the stairway, we see the razor is still in his right hand. Ballantine walks down the last steps and stops in front of the camera; his hand and the straight razor, glinting ominously, fill the frame (Fig. 6).

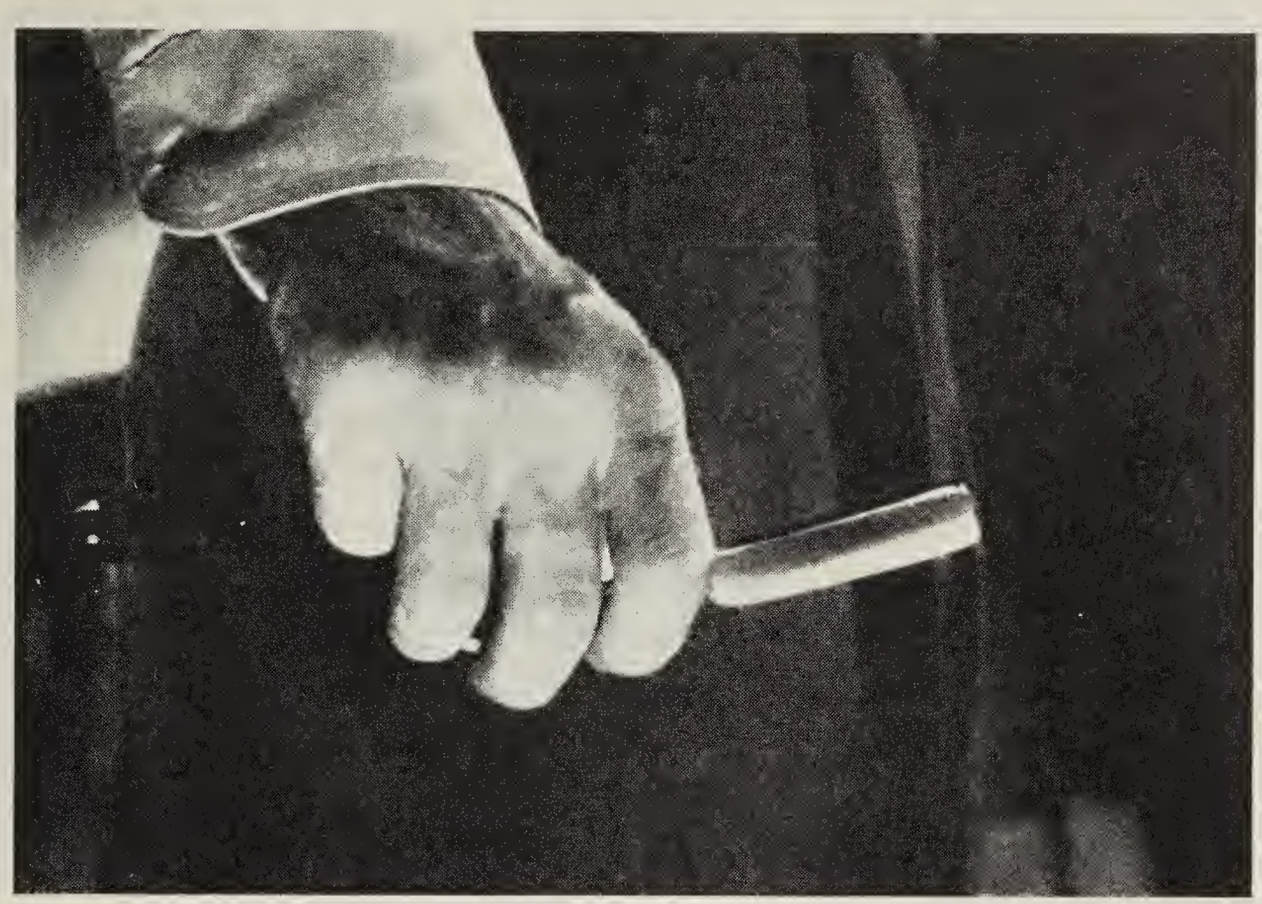


Fig. 6

Doctor Brulov's voice from off-screen startles us and there is a cut to a long shot of the doctor behind his desk from this same camera position (at the bottom of the stairway). The doctor and Ballantine face each other. The doctor continues a long banal monologue in which, among other things, he asks Ballantine to have a glass of milk with him. To get another glass he must walk past Ballantine to go to the kitchen. The camera pans with the doctor until it returns to the close-up of the razor; at that point the camera stops panning and we see the doctor recede down the hallway and into the kitchen—the whole time continuing his monologue. Then he returns to where Ballantine is standing and the camera follows him back to his desk where the pitcher of milk is sitting. With his back to the camera, the doctor fills the glass and brings it to Ballantine. Holding the glass in his right hand, he advances toward Ballantine until there is a close-up of only the razor and the glass of

milk. This ends the shot (Fig. 7). Rather than breaking this action up into many shorter shots—for example, shots of the razor, of the doctor, of Ballantine, etc.—Hitchcock uses one very complex shot and maintains incredible tension by keeping the razor in the foreground during much of the shot.

Lighting for Emphasis

Hitchcock is noted for using strange, expressionistic lighting techniques to help create an atmosphere of suspense in his films. In SUSPICION (1941) he put a small light bulb in a possibly poisoned glass of milk to concentrate the audience's attention on it. As Doctor Brulov approaches Ballantine with the glass of milk in SPELLBOUND, some bright light—inside or outside—makes the glass of milk luminous, emphasizing its whiteness. We already know Ballantine's strong reaction to whiteness and wonder what he will do when he sees the glass of milk. Also whenever we see the razor in this series of shots some light source is reflected off it.



Fig. 7

Trick Transitions

As Ballantine raises the glass to drink, Hitchcock cuts to Ballantine's subjective view of the doctor watching him drink. Slowly the glass comes into view until we are seeing the doctor's distorted image through the bottom of the glass. The shot is both realistic and expressionistic. Thick glass does distort our vision in this way, but, in this case, we are also forced to see the world through the eyes of a mentally deranged character. The glass is raised still further until the whole screen is filled with the white milk Ballantine is drinking. This white-out of the screen is used as a transition to the following sequence, the first few shots of which we have in the extract. But the transition also leaves us in total suspense as to what happened. It's a gimmick for sure, but it works, especially in retrospect when we learn that the milk contained bromides to put Ballantine to sleep. The milk quite literally blotted out Ballantine's vision.

Camera Movement for Audience Involvement

In order not to leave the viewers of this extract in an unresolved state of tension, we have continued it beyond the razor sequence by several shots. These shots contain a typical example of how Hitchcock moves the camera to involve the audience in the action and thus increase suspense. Constance dresses and descends the stairway; part way down she stops and a look of horror crosses her face. The next shot shows what she sees: Doctor Brulov slumped in a chair. In the next shot she continues down the stairs and the camera retreats before her—dollies backwards. The next shot is a subjective shot moving toward the doctor. Finally the tension is relieved when she discovers that he is only asleep.

A similar series of dolly shots appears in most of Hitchcock's films. A person approaches a potentially dangerous place or object. There are alternating shots of the subject and the object, but in both cases the camera continues to dolly toward the object. The intercutting itself creates tension, and the continuous movement toward the potential danger increases the audience's participation in it. This is a very effective technique and is now in general use.

Dialogue

Dialogue in Hitchcock's films is never very important in terms of content. The contrast between the idle babbling of the doctor and the silent Ballantine with a straight razor in his hand greatly increases the tension in the last part of the second sequence. The less aware of the danger the doctor is (or appears to be), the more involved the audience becomes, wanting even to intervene and warn him.

APPENDIX

Footnotes

1. François Truffaut, *Hitchcock: A Definitive Study of Alfred Hitchcock* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p. 120.
2. For a more thorough discussion of the role and significance of guilt in the films of Alfred Hitchcock, see Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol's *Hitchcock,* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1957).
3. Truffaut, p. 119.
4. Louis Giannetti, *Understanding Movies* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p. 68.

Extracts for Comparison

The extracts in the series from SPELLBOUND, THE HUMAN BEAST, and M all involve more or less dangerously deranged characters who may strike at any minute. Studied together, they offer the student the opportunity to compare in detail three cinematic methods of generating suspense and revealing unbalanced internal states. To study another style of Hitchcockian suspense, see the extract from NOTORIOUS.

Recommended Reading

Very little has been written on SPELLBOUND. The following books contain brief mention of the film and are worth reading for general insight into Hitchcock's themes and techniques:

Peter Bogdanovich, *The Cinema of Alfred Hitchcock* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1963).

Raymond Durgnat, *The Strange Case of Alfred Hitchcock* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1974).

Albert J. LaValley, ed., *Focus On Hitchcock* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972).

Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol, *Hitchcock* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1957). Not translated into English.

François Truffaut, *Hitchcock: A Definitive Study of Alfred Hitchcock* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967).

Robin Wood, *Hitchcock's Films* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1969).

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